

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A network-based personal contact management system, comprising:
  - a networked server system that provides a user interface having functionality for users to establish relationships with other users such that each user may have one or more contacts;
  - a database that stores relationship data indicating the relationships established between the users via the user interface, wherein the relationship data identifies, for each respective user, which other users are contacts of the respective user; and
- 10 a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts, such that a first user may submit a search request to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user.
- 15 2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the database additionally includes personal data records of the users, and the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user.
- 20 3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the user interface includes a personal address book interface through which each user can view information about his or her respective contacts in accordance with the permission levels.
4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by users for sharing information with other users, and the search module searches for contacts of contacts in accordance with the permission levels.
- 25 5. The system of Claim 4, wherein the permission levels indicate, for each respective contact of the first user, whether the first user is authorized to search for contacts of the respective contact.
6. The system of Claim 4, wherein the permission levels indicate, for at least a second user who is a contact of the first user, whether the first user is permitted to search for contacts of the second user.

7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module provides functionality for the first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the first user that reside in a common geographic region with the first user.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module provides functionality for the first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the first user that are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

9. The system of Claim 1, wherein the database additionally includes travel event data entered by users via the user interface, and the relationship data includes permissions that specify, for a pair of users that are contacts of each other, whether each user in the pair is authorized to be notified of crossing paths events in which both users of the pair are scheduled to be in the same location at the same time.

10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module runs on the server system and is accessed by the users via the user interface.

11. In a network-based system that provides functionality for users to communicate with other users, a computer-implemented method for assisting users in locating other users with which to communicate, the method comprising:

providing a database that stores, for each user of a plurality of users, information about contacts of the respective user;

20 receiving, from a first user of said plurality of users, a search request to search for contacts of contacts of the first user; and

in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user who is a contact of a contact of the first user will not be exposed to the first user unless the second user has granted permission to allow such exposure.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user, who is a contact of a third user who is a contact of the first user, will not be exposed to the

first user unless both the second user and the third user have granted permissions that authorize such exposure.

14. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that contacts of a second user who is a contact of the first user are not searched unless the second user has granted permission to the first user to search for contacts of the second user.

15. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database additionally comprises excluding a set of contacts of a second user who is a contact of the first user if the second user has not granted permission to the first user to search the second user's contacts.

16. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking residence information of the users into consideration to search for users who both (a) are contacts of contacts of the first user, and (b) reside in a common geographic region with the first user.

17. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking group affiliation data of the users into consideration to search for users who both (a) are contacts of contacts of the first user, and (b) are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

18. The method of Claim 11, wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises informing the first user that a user in said set is affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

19. The method of Claim 11, wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises displaying an indication of how each user in the set is related to the first user.

20. The method of Claim 11, further comprising providing to the first user an option to add a user from said set of users to a personal address book of the first user.

21. The method of Claim 11, wherein the database additionally stores personal data records of the users, and permissions granted by the users for exposing information from their respective personal data records to other users, and the method

further comprises providing user access to the personal data records in accordance with the permissions.

22. A network-based contact management system, comprising:
  - 5 a user interface that provides functionality for users to specify personal travel plans data, and to specify permissions data that identifies other users that are authorized to be notified of travel events specified within the personal travel plans data;
  - a database that stores the personal travel plans data and permissions data specified by the users via the user interface; and
  - 10 a program module which analyzes the travel plans data in accordance with the permissions data to detect, and notify users of, crossing paths events in which two users are scheduled to be in a common location during travel by at least one of the two users.
23. The system of Claim 22, wherein the program module detects crossing paths events for a first user that is traveling to a destination location at least in part by searching for contacts of the first user that are scheduled to travel to within a selected distance of the destination location
24. The system of Claim 22, wherein the program module detects crossing paths events for a first user that is traveling to a destination location at least in part by searching for contacts of the first user that live within a selected distance of the destination location.
25. The system of Claim 22, wherein the database additionally includes personal data records of the users, and the permissions data specifies permissions granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user.
26. The system of Claim 25, wherein the user interface includes a personal address book interface through which each user can view information about his or her respective contacts in accordance with the permissions.

27. The system of Claim 25, wherein the user interface additionally provides an option for each first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the respective first user.

28. The system of Claim 22, further comprising a networked server system 5 that hosts the user interface and program module and provides access to the database.

29. A computer-implemented method of facilitating the scheduling of meetings between remote individuals, comprising:

receiving travel event data that specifies a travel event of a first user;  
10 identifying a plurality of additional users in an address book data of the first user;

comparing the travel event data with data reflective of travel schedules of the plurality of additional users to determine whether any of the additional users are scheduled to be within a selected distance of the first user during said travel event; and

15 in response to detecting a crossing paths event in which an additional user is scheduled to be within said selected distance of the first user during said travel event, notifying the first user of the crossing paths event.

30. The method as is Claim 29, wherein the crossing paths event is an event in which the first user is scheduled to travel to a base location of the additional user.

20 31. The method as is Claim 29, wherein the crossing paths event is an event in which the first user and the additional user are scheduled to travel to the same city.

32. The method as is Claim 29, wherein the plurality of additional users consists of contacts of the first user as reflected in a contact management system.

25 33. The method as is Claim 29, further comprising identifying said additional users based at least in part on crossing paths permissions specified by contacts of the first user.